

County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

12860 CROSSROADS PARKWAY SOUTH • CITY OF INDUSTRY, CALIFORNIA 91746
Tel (562) 908-8400 • Fax (562) 908-0459



BRYCE YOKOMIZO
Director

LISA NUÑEZ
Chief Deputy



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February 7, 2006

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

SUBJECT: **COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES PUBLIC HEARING
REPORT ON COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCING
PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

On December 12, 2005, the Commission for Public Social Services sent you a report entitled, "Community Recommendations to Enhancing Public Social Services in Los Angeles County" (Attachment A). The report was a product of a Public Hearing that was conducted by the Commission on April 14, 2005.

In response to the items raised in the report, attached are two charts detailing DPSS' actions in relation to each item (Attachments B & C).

BY:cjm

Attachments

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Commission for Public Social Services

**Summary of Recommendations from Testimony at the
Los Angeles County Commission for Public Social Services Public Hearing Entitled
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April 14, 2005

Actions Taken or Planned By DPSS

Operational Recommendations

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Medi-Cal	More information and occasional intervention may be needed for Medi-Cal authorization of doctors' prescriptions at pharmacies to address the problem of refused prescriptions.	Counties are responsible for determining eligibility for applicants to Medi-Cal, maintaining their case record and ensuring they receive benefits at the appropriate levels. Counties do not play a role in obtaining authorizations for medical treatment or pharmaceuticals for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Pharmacy and medical providers deal directly with the State in obtaining Treatment Authorization Requests (TARs) for drugs not in the formulary. Counties are not involved in this process and are not routinely included in any of the communications between these entities. However, we have acted as liaison in some instances when it has come to our attention that a Medi-Cal beneficiary has been unable to resolve an issue regarding their coverage.
Food Stamps	Because people often receive services repeatedly from the same community-based organization (CBO), rotate eligibility workers among a variety of community geographic locations to reach new Food Stamp program candidates. Centralize Food Stamp	The Countywide Food Stamp Outreach Campaign, implemented in July 2005, identifies one Food Stamp Eligibility Worker (EW) in each of the 22 districts having Food Stamp Only operations. These EWs perform outreach and accept applications at non-traditional community sites. Identifying new sites and rotating between productive community partners is a component of the Campaign. The Joint Medi-Cal/Food Stamp/EITC Outreach Pilot was implemented in July

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	<p>program outreach instead of delegating outreach to various DPSS district offices; this method proved most effective in a pilot, because it facilitates CBO outreach workers' contact with DPSS eligibility workers.</p> <p>Improve DPSS communication and staff training so all DPSS staff will know when policies change (through State legislation or otherwise) and will evenly apply important Food Stamp program changes that facilitate participation, such as the following examples:</p> <p>a) Apply the face-to-face waiver option and eliminate multiple visits to process paperwork so working families can</p>	<p>2005, with the purpose of testing the effectiveness of two different outreach administrative models; centralized and non-centralized. The Department is in the process of evaluating the results of the pilot.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">See Below</p> <p>Detailed instructions regarding the use of the face-to-face waiver have been issued to eligibility staff and they are encouraged to evaluate the need to waive the face-to-face interview for all Food Stamp households at intake and/or recertification to maximize Food Stamp Program participation.</p>

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	<p>benefit even if their work schedule prevents them from attending meetings in district offices;</p> <p>b) Cars no longer count against eligibility; encourage applications from individuals regardless of car ownership;</p> <p>c) Fully implement transitional benefits program; make sure adults who leave CalWORKs receive Food Stamps for seven subsequent months as allowed;</p> <p>d) Make sure people receive all benefits to which they are entitled across the board.</p>	<p>The Department currently encourages applications from individuals regardless of car ownership and emphasizes the change in policy regarding car ownership in all outreach materials and presentations.</p> <p>Automation of Transitional Food Stamps (TFS) went into effect April 1, 2005. LEADER now automatically converts the Food stamp portion of the CalWORKs/Food Stamp case to TFS the month following termination of the CalWORKs benefits.</p> <p>The Department has an ongoing commitment to issuing correct benefits. The Quality Assurance and Quality Control sections ensure that the Department applies the correct Food Stamp regulations to all households, thus ensuring that the household receives the correct Food Stamp benefits.</p>

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	<p>Capture more multi-media exposure to generate wider visibility of the Food Stamp program, highlighting the Health and Nutrition Hotline 877-597-4777.</p> <p>Routinely administer customer service satisfaction surveys on an ongoing basis in food pantry lines, WIC programs, schools etc., to gather information from clients about their application processes, and also learn why people do not apply; regularly use this data in the DPSS "Performance Counts" process.</p> <p>More effectively promote the Restaurant Food Stamp program, so more low-cost restaurants with healthful food will become certified,</p>	<p>The Department has contracted with a social marketing consultant to develop effective outreach marketing materials that will encourage people who might be eligible to apply for Food Stamp benefits. Materials resulting from this contract will be finalized shortly, and used to develop a Food Stamp Outreach advertising campaign.</p> <p>The Department will develop and administer a customer satisfaction survey instrument to assist in improving our delivery of service and to identify reasons potentially eligible households do not apply. We will use the survey results to refine our outreach strategies and streamline our delivery of application services, to the extent possible.</p> <p>Using the Department of Health Services' restaurant listing, DPSS has mailed a solicitation letter to 10,000 restaurants informing them of the Restaurant Meals Program and encouraging them to participate in the program. Over 300 restaurants have responded. Currently, the Department has signed MOUs with approximately 180 restaurants that provide a variety of low-cost and healthy</p>

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	particularly benefiting homeless individuals who have no place to cook their own meals.	foods. The Department continues to work with additional interested restaurants to bring them into the program.
Earned Income Tax Credit	<p>Continue to increase EITC participation among eligible tax payers, including increasing tax filing of very low income individuals who may believe there is no reason for them to file a tax return.</p> <p>DPSS should study available IRS data, consisting of total tax filings and EITC filings by zip code, to determine regions that may require greater promotion of EITC.</p>	<p>DPSS is actively promoting the EITC among its entire Medi-Cal, Food Stamp, CalWORKs and GR caseloads through the mailing of a brochure in which a prominent message is, "You may be entitled to a refund even if you are not required to file a tax return." In addition, DPSS has implemented a countywide project whereby trained DPSS staff prepare tax returns with EITC claims for employed CalWORKs participants.</p> <p>DPSS is an active participant in the EITC Campaign Partnership which, through the use of IRS data, has identified areas of greater need for EITC outreach and as a result is sponsoring grass-roots outreach campaigns and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites in those areas.</p>

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Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #1	<p>DPSS should overcome outrageous delays and arbitrary denials in delivery of supportive services, including childcare, transportation, tools and uniforms for work, and books for school; problems are particularly significant in Santa Clarita, San Fernando and the Antelope Valley.</p>	<p>To ensure timely delivery of Supportive Services (ancillary, transportation, child care) to GAIN participants, a Supportive Services automation process was developed for a pilot involving three community colleges (College of the Canyons, Pierce College and Antelope Valley College) that serve the areas where problems were identified.</p> <p>The automated process allows the colleges to submit participants' supportive service requests directly on the DPSS GEARS computer system. This process includes a mechanism to track each ancillary expense request through the entire process. The tracking log is utilized as a tool to identify any delays in the processing of supportive services requests. As part of the automated process, a Notice of Action (NA 823) is automatically mailed to the participant. It provides participants with a timely and detailed notification of the outcome of their ancillary expense request.</p> <p>For participants not served by the three colleges in the pilot, a manual tracking mechanism was developed to ensure the timely processing of supportive services requests.</p> <p>A Task Force was implemented to review and process all outstanding issuance requests, and a DPSS manager was assigned to serve as a full-time liaison, dedicated to ensuring that all issues involving transportation and ancillary expenses are resolved in a timely manner.</p>

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		<p>The advance payment process was expedited to facilitate active engagement and successful participation.</p> <p>Additionally, Transportation and Ancillary/Work-Related Expenses Refresher Training was provided to all GAIN (contracted and non-contracted) staff in August and September 2005. Responses were prepared to over 200 follow-up questions resulting from the training, and the Questions and Answers were released to all contracted and non-contracted staff.</p> <p>DPSS continues to provide policy guidance directly to case management contractors in support of appropriate service delivery.</p> <p>Further, DPSS, the community colleges and the child care agency that serves the Santa Clarita, Antelope Valley and San Fernando Valley areas met in September 2005 to discuss timely provision of child care services. DPSS plans to facilitate ongoing meetings between the community colleges and the child care agency to ensure that problematic issues are immediately brought to the table and resolved promptly.</p>
Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #2	Provide timely and effective CalWORKs supportive services to individuals, such as disabled individuals or persons	During the Ancillary/Work-Related Expenses and Transportation Refresher Training provided in August – September 2005, DPSS' policy on eligibility to supportive services for participants with disabilities and/or in Domestic Violence was reiterated. Additionally, written material containing such policy/procedures

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	participating in a domestic violence component, who are not mandated to meet a work requirement but who volunteer to work or attend school; exempt volunteers are routinely denied payments.	was reviewed and distributed at the training.
Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #3	Whenever DPSS contracts services out, DPSS should: Improve contract monitoring and address the fact that DPSS contractors routinely fail to abide by DPSS timeliness for delivery of supportive services; avoid verification systems that require more than two levels of review.	The Contract Monitoring Division is monitoring transportation/ancillary issuances on a weekly basis to ensure timeliness and accuracy of supportive services. DPSS is currently reviewing the Board-ordered County Issuance Approval Process, in consultation with the Auditor-Controller and County Counsel, to identify any potential modifications which would streamline the process.
Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #4	Whenever DPSS contracts services out DPSS should: Improve training of DPSS contracting staff, and address staff turnover in this unit, so	To improve contracted staff training, language will be incorporated into new contracts requiring the contractor to coordinate with DPSS Academy in scheduling training. The contractor will be responsible for ensuring their staff, both existing and new, are properly trained in all areas related to providing services.

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	the staff will understand the program they are administering.	The DPSS Contract Management Division plans to monitor contracted staff turnover rate by requiring the contractors to report new hires, discharges and leave of absences monthly. Contractors will be required to have an active recruitment program to address their turnover rate.
Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #5	DPSS should become more effective in issuing all documents critical to program participation, such as Notices of Action and Redetermination Letters, in the ten threshold languages; currently many of these are not translated to the extent needed by participants in the County.	To address the issue/concern that participants are not receiving the notices in the appropriate language, DPSS' Information Technology Division developed a web-based application whereby Notices of Action (NOA) in the threshold languages can be easily accessed for the IHSS, GAIN and GROW Programs. CalWORKs, General Relief, Food Stamps and Medi-Cal Program NOAs will be accessible via the LEADER system. Currently, the NOAs are in the process of being converted into PDF format and loaded on to the application. The application will be piloted in February 2006. This application is a short-term solution since a long-term solution for LEADER to automatically print notices in languages other than English and Spanish is subject to State funding for additional equipment and software.
Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #6	Develop a comprehensive multi-benefit outreach campaign---a regional strategy; enlist the County, LA County Office of Education, the City, LAUSD, Housing	DPSS has implemented and/or is currently piloting various coordinated outreach models. These models all have a common denominator to promote Food Stamps and Medi-Cal, as well as the EITC. DPSS has established partnerships with CBOs, FBOs, other County departments and government agencies to provide more comprehensive services and information to the general public. DPSS has also entered into a partnership with the City of Los Angeles ACCESS

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	<p>Authorities, Community Health Councils, DCFS, Mental Health, DHS, Probation and other agencies to work more effectively together on outreach and enrollment and to bridge gaps for residents of low income housing and persons lacking health insurance who may be eligible for a variety of programs (EITC, Healthy Families, Healthy Kids, Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, Cal Grants, Pell Grants, low income utility rates).</p>	<p>program, which is a City of L.A. multi-benefit outreach campaign focusing on four components: health, home, work, and school, which targets low-income households with the objective to raise awareness of anti-poverty programs that promote self-sufficiency, including Cal Grants and low-income utility rates.</p>
<p>Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #7</p>	<p>Address needs for interagency data matches to track families as they move from one location to another, with the goal of overcoming obstacles to retention in programs.</p>	<p>DPSS is a leader in the effort to work with other departments and identify overlap of services, as well as service use patterns by members of specific groups within the population. For example, DPSS is currently developing a proposal to the Productivity Investment Fund to examine the services of multiple departments to indigent adults across the county.</p>

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Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #8	DPSS district staff should improve awareness of rules that allow services to non-citizens who are battered.	DPSS program staff will work with DPSS line operations to improve staff awareness of rules for battered non-citizens.

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Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #9	<p>DPSS should develop pilot programs to test best practices for serving the hard-to-serve and the hard-to-employ; focus upon helping these individuals overcome barriers, making sure they receive the supportive services they need to achieve self-sufficiency. Pilot ideas include improving client awareness of various programs (e.g. several kinds of Medi-Cal programs, homelessness prevention etc.); reducing caseloads for more intensive case-management; improving assessment of literacy skills; testing new literacy programs; improving follow-up to make sure literacy programs are accessed.</p>	<p>DPSS has special programs in place to serve the hard-to-serve and the hard-to-employ CalWORKs participants, such as expungement of criminal records, work experience opportunities, and home visit outreach programs. An enhanced subsidized employment pilot is starting in February 2006 for the hard-to-employ.</p> <p>To increase employment and self-sufficiency among CalWORKs participants, DPSS has implemented: 1) an enhanced literacy assessment for non-English/non-Spanish participants; 2) improved accommodations for participants with disabilities; and 3) an enhanced program to identify and address learning disabilities.</p>

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Recomm. To Improve Outreach Comment #10	Help promote the new Parents of Watts job-training program in SPA 6. **SPA 6 – Exposition Park, Florence, Compton, South Central and South Region IHSS Offices	DPSS will make information about the program available to participants, and will add the program to the South Bay Workforce Investment Board's Bidder's List for future solicitations.

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Policy Recommendations

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Food Stamps	Support and endorse AB 696 (Chu) "Food for Families Act of 2005", which decreases barriers to Food Stamp program participation among the working poor and others, in particular by removing the fingerprint requirement.	<p>AB 696 (Chu) was vetoed by the Governor on October 7, 2005. In the Governor's veto message, he stated that he would not sign the bill, as it would provide for an opportunity for increased fraud and abuse without guaranteeing increased participation in the program as intended by the legislation.</p> <p>Current County legislative policy supports efforts to fund and maintain the Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS) for the CalWORKS and General Relief programs. We will continue to support any legislation that is consistent with this policy, including legislation to eliminate SFIS for households applying for Food Stamps only, with no cash assistance.</p>
Earned Income Tax Credit	Advocate for a California State Earned Income Tax Credit	Currently there is no County Legislative policy that addresses advocating for a State Earned Income Tax Credit.
General Public Comment #1	DPSS systems should focus more on facilitation of participants' program participation than on fraud---the system is currently out of balance.	DPSS is committed to the philosophy that participants should receive all the benefits to which they are entitled. Notwithstanding that, it is also important to have systems in place to help ensure program integrity. The ongoing challenge is to keep both these goals in balance, not letting one supersede the other. DPSS reinforces this concept through its training. For example, in August 2005, DPSS staff trained every GAIN Case Manager on supportive services issuances, training both on the available services and the issuance approval process designed to maintain program integrity. DPSS intends on continuing this approach

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		to balance program services and program integrity.
General Public Comment #2	Keep public services public; re-examine the privatization of welfare services; do not outsource services such as Medi-Cal eligibility determination or CalWORKs job placement to private corporations; actual performance data from privatized welfare services does not justify continuation of this delivery method [specific examples were presented].	The Department makes decisions about contracting on a case-by-case basis subject to direction from the Board. The Department does not have any current plans to contract for any services currently provided by County employees.
General Public Comment #3	Identify communities by zip codes, instead of by SPA or other designations, to eliminate confusion among agencies with overlapping services; incorporate Medi-Cal and Food Stamp districts. The idea is to "sort out" and streamline various sub-County regional service designations to facilitate coordination	Currently, the DPSS Caseload Characteristics report is produced each month by SPA as well as by Zip Code. There are no other monthly reports by SPA. Future ad-hoc requests can be either by SPA or zip code as requested.